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RED RIVER BILL, The Prince of Scouts.

BY J. R. SCOTT.



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RED RIVER BILL,

THE PRINCE OF SCOUTS.

By J. R. SCOTT,

Author of "Skeleton Gulch," "Tracked by a Fiend," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A TUSSEL WITH RED-SKINS.

Two men were crouched behind a clump of stunted cedars, gazing eagerly, nay anxiously, beyond the hills, to the wide expanse of prairie, that seemed to spread to the very verge of the southern horizon. To the west a line of blue peaks marked the course of the Black Hills.

On the summit of an outlying ridge the two men in question were crouched. Each clasped a rifle, and knife and revolver dangled from the belts of both. One, a bronzed graybeard; the other not far from twenty, young and wiry, with a keen eye and firm mouth.

Colonel Adams and his nephew, Harold Tracy, had left their little cabin that morning, and looked through the hills after signs of the rich yellow ore, said to be very plentiful in some parts of the Black Hills region.

Their search had not been utterly unsuccessful. Bits of the rock had been discovered, which promised well, and it was in high spirits that the colonel and his nephew turned their steps once more on the homeward way.

Harold's heart swelled high with hope, for, with wealth to back his claims, his fair cousin Anna would no longer turn the cold shoulder upon the "beardless boy," as she frequently termed the youth. Nephew and uncle were hastening homeward with the good news, when, on gaining the summit of the ridge in question, Colonel Adams grasped the arm of his companion and drew him quickly down.

"Look yonder!" he cried, huskily, at the same time pointing to the south.

A crowd of moving mustangs were seen upon the plain—fully a hundred—and each animal bore an Indian upon his back.

"What does it, mean?" queried Harold.

"These are Sioux," answered Colonel Adams, "and I fear they mean mischief. Sitting Bull must be on the war-path at last. God protect us if such is the case. I can see now the folly of bringing my family to this wretched country. Many times have I repented the act, and now, if anything should happen, I should always blame myself, since my wife and Anna did not wish to come, and only consented after long urging on my part."

"Don't cry over what can't be helped," uttered Harold. "It may not be as bad as you imagine after all. See the redskins are making preparations to camp."

And the young man's words proved true. The Sioux

dismounted near a clump of timber at the foot of the hill, on the bank of a small stream, and made preparations for passing the night there.

"Come," cried Harold, "let us get out of this. No doubt those rascals will be looking up this way after game, and it wouldn't be safe for us if we chanced to meet."

"I wish I knew the exact condition of affairs," muttered Adams. "I've heard rumors of an Indian outbreak, and this looks as though there was some truth in it. I see no other way than to get out of this region to some post, until the trouble blows over. Our gold mine must remain unworked for a time."

The two men crept cautiously away, until a towering rock hid the enemy from sight, then they came to a halt once more.

"I hate to run like this," cried Harold. "If there wasn't more'n a dozen, I'd be in for makin' a fight. I should like to take a few Sioux scalps back East with me when I go."

"More than likely your own scalp will dangle at a Sioux belt before the week is past," returned the colonel.

"Ugh! don't prophesy, Uncle Dan," cried the youth. "I don't fancy losing my scalp the least bit. I've a notion to go down among the red rascals and see if Sitting Bull's with them. Perhaps we might make terms with him. He's a chivalrous old fellow they say."

"That is the opinion entertained by Eastern folks," replied the colonel, "but Western settlers know an altogether different story, you may be sure."

The two men moved on, passing over another ridge, which brought them to a level plateau some acres in extent. Scarcely had they set foot in the edge of this when the sharp crack of a rifle woke the echoes, and a bullet whistled in close proximity to the head of Colonel Adams, who was in advance.

Quickly the two men sank to their knees and gazed sharply about, no sign of an enemy being visible. For several minutes a dead silence reigned.

"Who in thunder fired that shot?" muttered young Harold, who sat impatiently waiting for something to turn up.

No answer was vouchsafed to this very pertinent question, and becoming impatient, Harold rose to his feet.

Spang!

Down dropped the youth in a heap, and then the very hills rang with terrific yells.

"They've killed the boy!" groaned Colonel Adams, as he cocked his rifle and awaited the onset of the foe.

Three painted Sioux had dashed from the bushes some rods away, and were bearing down upon the old colonel.

Adams had thrown his rifle to his shoulder, and the moment a redskin filled the sights he fired, and one of the oncoming Indians fell to rise no more.

Dropping his useless weapon, Colonel Adams drew his revolver, but he had time to fire only once when the two red devils were upon him.

With the foremost Colonel Adams clinched, after sending a bullet into the shoulder of his companion.

A trial of strength then ensued that was worth looking at. Though a man of fifty, the old colonel was no child, and he had been an expert wrestler in his young days. He had not forgotten all the old tricks yet, and with a trip and a wrench he brought the redskin to the ground beneath him.

The colonel clutched his knife now, and with a well-aimed blow sent the point to the heart of his red antagonist.

At this moment, however, the third Indian, who had been wounded, but not disabled, sprang upon Adams with uplifted tomahawk. The colonel grasped his descending arm, and held back his doom for the moment.

During the struggle Adams' revolver, with only one barrel discharged, had fallen to the ground. While struggling for the mastery—a struggle for life and death—the quick eye of the Sioux caught sight of the handle of the colonel's revolver just peeping from under a bush. Reaching down with his free hand the Sioux soon grasped the weapon and pressed it against the breast of his adversary. Then it was that the brave mountaineer believed his fate was sealed.

But even as the red man's finger pressed the trigger a sharp spang cut the air, and the Sioux warrior uttered a shriek of mortal agony and rolled to the ground.

The bullet from a friendly rifle had done its work, and the last enemy of the colonel had given up the ghost.

Quickly Colonel Adams rose to his feet, just as the person who had sent a bullet to the heart of the Sioux appeared upon the scene, holding a Winchester rifle in his hand.

A tall, spare figure, clothed in hunting costume, a face strikingly handsome, framed in by heavy masses of chestnut hair that hung to his broad shoulders, the whole surmounted by a black felt hat, from the crown of which drooped an ostrich feather, and you have the picture of the man who confronted old Colonel Adams.

Two revolvers and a knife depended from the belt at the waist of the new-comer. He was, indeed, well-armed, and apparently a man of nerve, as well as of great physical endurance.

"Is the young chap dead?"

This question fell from the lips of the new-comer before the old colonel could utter a word.

"Alas! yes," groaned the old colonel. "A Sioux bullet has found my poor nephew's heart;" and with the words Adams sank on his knees beside the silent form of his unfortunate young nephew.

CHAPTER II.

RED RIVER BILL.

"SHOT through the brain!" groaned Colonel Adams, after making an examination. "This will kill my daughter."

"Let me see," and the hunter bent down and thrust his fingers into the wound on the young man's head. After a moment he again rose to his feet.

"I don't think the youth is dead," he said, with a smile. "The bullet glanced without entering his brain. I will bring some water, and if I ain't mistaken, the youngster'll come out kicking in less than hour."

And the hunter's prophecy proved true.

In a very short time Harold Tracy regained his senses, and aside from a very severe headache, he was none the worse for his late mishap.

The old colonel was quite beside himself with joy, and overwhelmed the new-comer with thanks.

"But for you, both of us would have been killed," asserted Adams.

"Never mind makin' a fuss over what I have done," returned the stranger. "I am doing such things every day, and no one thinks to praise me for it."

"Your name?" questioned Adams.

"I'm called Red River Bill."

"By the powers! is that so?" ejaculated the astonished and delighted colonel. "I have heard of the prince of scouts, Red River Bill, and am glad to know you," and grasping the plainsman's hand, Adams wrung it warmly.

"We are on dangerous ground," asserted Red River Bill. "Do you live far from here?"

"'Bout three miles to the north-west."

"You have a family?"

"Wife and daughter."

A cloud came to the face of the scout.

"I am sorry this is so," he mused. "Your cabin, if I mistake not, stood in a little hollow on the bank of a small creek?"

"Yes," answered Adams. "You must have seen the spot."

"Yes, once, six months since. It was very foolhardy in you to leave females there alone. Did you not know that Sitting Bull is on the war-path, and that every Sioux is the white man's deadly enemy?"

"I had heard some such rumor."

"It is true. I don't think you will find your house standing when you reach Silver Gulch."

"What do you mean?" cried Colonel Adams eagerly, grasping the scout by the arm.

"I mean that your cabin lay directly in the course of a party of redskins, who passed over these hills not many hours since. The three who lie here are but stragglers from the main body."

"Then we must lose no time in hurrying forward," cried the old colonel, now greatly excited. "Great Heaven! I hope no ill has befallen my wife and child."

Harold Tracy was as eager as his uncle to press forward, and Red River Bill stood watching the two men as they hurried away and were soon lost to view beyond a clump of mountain cedars.

"Well, well," he muttered, "it beats all what fools some

folks are. A man must be crazy to think of bringing a family into this God-cursed region. I had intended going east to St. Paul's, but perhaps I'd better look after this old man and his friends first. I will take a look at the Sioux over yon, and and then turn my attention to these unfortunate females, who have, undoubtedly, fallen into the hands of Sitting Bull's braves."

The scout, after removing the scalps of the dead warriors, turned his steps in the direction of the plain on which, near the hills, an hundred Sioux warriors had lately struck camp.

In the meantime Harold Tracy and his uncle pushed rapidly forward over the hills, intent on gaining their home at the earliest possible moment.

The shades of night were falling when they gained the summit of a ridge overlooking the hollow in which the Adams cabin stood. Colonel Adams paused on the brow of the hill and dropped the breach of his rifle to the ground. For some moments the old man was unable to utter a word, so deep was the whelming tide of his emotion.

Where once stood the cabin home of a happy little family, naught remained but a heap of smoking ruins. No wonder the old man felt weak and sick at heart as he gazed. Harold Tracy recovered first from the lethargy of dismay.

"Uncle Dan, this is the work of the Sioux."

"My God! say not so," gasped the old colonel. "There may be some mistake. The house might have caught fire by accident."

But Harold Tracy knew better than this. The presence of the Sioux on the plain, together with the late rumors, convinced the youth that his aunt and cousin had fallen victims to Indian treachery. He made no further comment, however, but began the descent of the hill.

His example was quickly followed by his uncle, and in a little while the two men stood beside the smoking ruins of their late home.

Colonel Adams called the name of his wife, but no answer was vouchsafed.

"It is the work of the Sioux," said Harold.

"Alas! I fear you are in the right, my boy," groaned the old man, his bronzed face quite pale from the shock. "We must take the trail at once and hunt down the miscreants."

"Then you think the woman are yet living?"

"Certainly. Indian policy is to carry all females into captivity," said the colonel.

A minute examination of the ground about the ruined cabin revealed the fact that a large party of Indians had been in the vicinity, but the shades of approaching night forbade a minute search. It would not be possible to follow the trail until the dawn of another day.

Old Colonel Adams stood by the smouldering embers, leaning gloomily on his rifle, when the touch of a hand on his shoulder roused him from his bitter reveries.

Harold Tracy stood beside his uncle, holding a bit of brown paper between his fingers.

"Look at this, Uncle Don," said the youth.

"That amounts to nothing."

"Don't it? Read and see!" cried Harold, evidently not a little excited.

Mr. Adams took the paper and glanced over it.

"My old eyes are too dim. If there's readin' on it please let's have it, Harold."

The youth complied, by reading as follows:

"COLONEL ADAMS:—This is to notify you that I am still in the land of the living. By chance I ran upon your cabin on the mountain. This was the first intimation I had of your being out West. Sitting Bull is on the war-path, and every white man will be killed. Flee the country if you would escape. I will care for Julaine and her daughter. In any event you will never see them again.

"BURLING SHARP."

For half a minute after the reading of this remarkable missive Colonel Adams stood glaring at the coals as though transfixed. At length he recovered his equilibrium, and smote the breach of his rifle with his clenched hand.

"By the angel Gabriel!" he ejaculated, "can it be that that monster still lives? Yes, it must be so, and Julaine and Anna are in his hands. My God! this is worse than death, infinitely worse."

Harold Tracy stood regarding the speaker in evident wonder. The name of Burling Sharp was a new one to him.

"Who is this Burling Sharp?" finally questioned the youth, when the old colonel's excitement had somewhat subsided.

"The wickedest man that ever lived," uttered Adams. "I had a report of his death nearly two years ago. Yet it seems the report was false, and now this villain is training in the ranks of Sitting Bull's braves, a fitting place for such a black-hearted scoundrel."

"And Anna is in this man's hands?"

"Yes. Both had better be dead—far better!" groaned the old colonel. "The Sioux are devils incarnate, but they are mere children compared to this satan's envoy."

After a short discussion, it was decided to remain near the ruined cabin until morning, and then set out at once on the trail of the incendiaries and thieves. Shortly after the two men had secreted themselves near at hand, a tall form debouched upon the plateau, and strode silently toward the dying embers of the mountaineer's ruined home.

CHAPTER III.

THE RENEGADE.

No happier home existed in the West than that of Colonel Adams. In a wild and picturesque spot among the Black Hills the man had erected his cabin, and his wife and daughter, though lonely at first, were content with the thought that one day they might be possessors of untold wealth, which it was said these hills inclosed. The wild scenery and beautiful landscape to be seen from the summits of the higher ranges brought exclamations of rapture from the lips of the beautiful Anna on more than one occasion, when she wandered thither in company with her cousin Harold.

Little did the light-hearted maid suspect how soon all the pleasures of their mountain home was to be dissipated. Even on the morning when Harold and Mr. Adams left the cabin for the last time, no shadow of danger lurked over the hearts of the inmates.

Immediately after noon Anna left the house to take one

of her daily rambles into the hills. She left her mother busily knitting by the open door, and went merrily across the plateau, singing a gentle home song that came bubbling up from a heart utterly care-free.

Climbing a steep hillside, Anna soon stood on the summit, and gazed far away over the undulating swells, crowned with cedar and tamarac. Seating himself on a flat rock, she began plucking the stunted bits of grass that had forced its way through crevices in the rock.

The sun hung in an unclouded sky. The air was soft and pure, one of those rare autumnal days occasionally encountered in this northern clime.

The sound of a step fell upon the maiden's ear, then a shadow fell athwart the rugged soil at her feet.

Anna looked up, expecting to meet the laughing gaze of her cousin Harold. But in this she was disappointed.

A short, thick-set man, or Indian, she knew not which, so dark was his face, confronted her. He was dressed after the fashion of a mountain hunter, and held a Winchester rifle in his left hand.

Hunters and prospectors had stopped at her father's cabin, and Anna was nowise startled at the sight of this man.

"I suppose your are looking for my father," she said, quickly.

"Your father lives down yonder?" pointing below the hill as he spoke, where a blue coil of smoke was ascending towards the heavens.

The girl gave an affirmative answer.

The keen, black eyes of the man regarded Anna's face closely.

"A deuced pretty girl," he muttered. "Is your father home to-day?"

"No; he is out prospecting!"

"Ah!" with a glitter of satisfaction shooting from his evil eyes. "Do you mind telling me your name, my pretty gal?"

"Not the least objection," she returned, laughing. "I am the daughter of Colonel Adams."

The man gave a start then, and a sudden shadow flitted across his dark face.

"Colonel Adams," he muttered, "mebbe there's mor'n one man with that handle. I'll see. You didn't come from Minnesota, did ye?"

"Yes."

"From Minneapolis?"

"That city was once my home," returned the girl, a little surprised at his evident curiosity. "Did you know my father, sir?"

"Mebbe."

He reached down suddenly and grasped the girl by the arm, while his black eyes shot an evil glance into her face.

"You will go with me, miss."

Anna was on her feet, then, like a flash. She did not yet understand that the stranger meant to act as an enemy.

"If you will come down to the cabin, sir, you can rest until my father returns. No doubt he will be very glad to meet you."

"No doubt," grunted the man, "but I can't go down

just now. I've got business off in another quarter, and you must go with me."

"I can't do that."

"We'll see, my honey."

The great hand of the hunter closed in a grip of iron upon the arm of the maiden. She was pinioned as though in a vise. He began to move away, dragging the girl after him in a most unceremonious manner.

Anna began to scream. This seemed to encourage the villain, and he laid down his rifle and drew a huge knife.

"Another yelp from you, miss, and I'll cut yer throat; now mind what I tell you!" and he held the keen edge of his knife close up to the fair white throat.

As may be supposed, the girl uttered no outcry after that, but suffered herself to be led along in silence. Down into a dense thicket they now passed, and through this into a little opening, where, to Anna's surprise, they encountered a dozen hideously-painted Sioux warriors.

Considerable excitement ensued when the captive was presented, and the white hunter talked rapidly for some moments in the Indian tongue.

Shortly after this six braves departed under the lead of the renegade—for such he seemed to be—and Anna was left to the tender mercies of the savages. No chance of escape offered, and the maiden's heart sank in her bosom as she gazed about upon the hideously-painted faces of the Sioux.

Anna was quick-witted, and she readily guessed the truth—that the Sioux were on the war-path. She had heard of Sitting Bull, and judged that these were from his command.

It was with the deepest anxiety that Anna awaited the return of the renegade and his red companions.

In the course of half an hour they returned, bringing with them Anna's mother, whose hands were secured behind her back, an indignity not yet inflicted upon the first captive.

"Anna, Anna! this is a sad day for us," moaned Mrs. Adams. "We shall all be murdered. An Indian war has begun, and every white in Dakota and the further West will fall."

"Not so bad as that, I hope," returned the maiden. "This may be only a small party of discontented natives."

"No, no; he has told me the truth. Sitting Bull is on the war-path."

"Who told you this?"

"Burling Sharp."

"And who is Burling Sharp, pray?" queried Anna.

"The man who brought us hither to save us from the scalping knife of Sitting Bull's warriors."

Anna glanced at the stout, dark-featured renegade, who sat some distance away, smoking a short black pipe.

"This is the story he has told, is it?" uttered Anna, a chill of fear entering her heart. "I am sorry to say that I am not favorably impressed with the man. Did you know him in St. Paul, mother?"

"I knew him years ago, Anna," returned Mrs. Adams.

"Was he then a good man?"

"I believe so. At any rate he has always been my friend, and we must trust him in this dire emergency. We

are safer here than elsewhere. The cabin was fired by the Indians as soon as we left."

"And this good friend of ours permitted the vandalism!" cried Anna, indignantly.

"He was powerless to prevent."

At this point in the conversation Burling Sharp came forward and stood facing the women.

"You are discussing the situation, I see," he said. "No doubt, because your mother is bound, you think I have no love for her, but such is not the case. I loved the old gal when she was a slip of a maiden. I'll protect her now, and see that old Adams nor Indians get their hands on her. As for you, Miss Anna, I haven't fully made up my mind. I owe old Adams a grudge, and mebbe' twould be as well to let old Sitting Bull have you for a squaw. I ain't a gentle gazelle by any means. I didn't lie about there being an Indian war; there is one, and I'm bound to have some satisfaction out of it. There's some things in the past as needs wiping out. I mean to wear old Adams's scalp at my belt, and marry his widow, that's jest the size o' the thing, ladies."

The tone and character of the man was out now. Even Mrs. Adams could no longer persuade herself that Burling Sharp was aught but a heartless cut-throat of the vilest sort. When he produced a cord and attempted to bind Anna's hands, she resisted, and struck him a smart blow in the face, which so enraged him that he dealt the girl a blow in return that felled her to the ground.

"I'll learn you to behave yourself, I reckon," hissed the renegade, as he lifted Anna once more to her feet.

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

DRAWING the hammer of his rifle, Harold Tracy covered the tall form of the new-comer. His finger was on the trigger when old Colonel Adams touched his arm.

"Do not fire, the fellow is a white man," whispered Adams, quickly.

"And the renegade who wrote that note, very likely."

"Gracious! if I thought so I would shoot him myself!" growled the old colonel, in a louder tone than he meant to use, since it must have reached the ears of the man beside the embers of the house.

He started suddenly, then crouched low behind a rock with leveled rifle.

"Friend or foe?"

"Friend!" ejaculated the colonel, joyously, as he recognized the voice of Red River Bill.

"You are Colonel Adams?"

"Yes."

The scout sprang to his feet and advanced to the side of the two men in the thicket.

"This was your home?" and the scout pointed toward the smoking embers of the cabin.

"It was my home," assented the colonel. "A fiend in human shape has destroyed it, and with God's help I will have the heart's blood of the man who compassed this iniquity. I have sworn it, and I will keep my oath."

"It is the work of Sitting Bull's braves," said the scout.

"Liberty, but a white man led them," asserted the colonel.

"Ha! say you so?" cried the scout, with sudden interest. "Can it be that Serpent Tongue is in this region? What sort of a man is the one you mention?"

The colonel gave a minute description of Burling Sharp. The scout grated his teeth harshly.

"You have described Serpent Tongue," he uttered fiercely. "If he has been here, then I have a duty to perform. I will take the trail, and hunt him to his grave."

"He has wronged you, then?" questioned curious Harold.

"Beyond reparation."

The voice of Red River Bill was husky with emotion, when he uttered the last words.

Harold could not but wonder at this emotion. It seemed that Burling Sharp had wronged two men who were entire strangers. He must be a bad man indeed.

"Would you mind telling me how this Burling Sharp has injured you?" finally questioned Harold.

"He murdered my sister, that is all I can tell you. I am glad that I have found his trail at last. I went to New Mexico last year, searching for the scoundrel, but he eluded me, and I could find no trace of him. I think he must have found an asylum among the Indians at that time, as he seems to be at home with them now."

"Very likely," agreed the colonel.

The three men concluded to remain where they were until morning, one of them to stand guard while the others slept. The scout promised to act as guard until midnight, after which Harold was to take his place.

Nothing occurred before the noon of night, and Red River Bill lay down with his rifle in hand, while Harold took his place to keep watch and ward over their slumbers.

Like a statue the youth stood, leaning against a tree, with his gun at a cock, ready for emergency.

The night waned and Harold's eyes drooped. For some reason it required an effort to keep his eyes open, and in spite of himself, every now and then the lids would close and the youth drop into a doze.

Once the young man awoke with a start.

A strange thrill of fear shot through his heart as he realized that he had been sleeping at his post.

He straightened up and clutched his rifle tightly, and gazed sharply into the open space beyond the leafy covert.

A slight breeze stirred the leaves, and fanned the embers of the ruined house into a slight flame.

By the light of this Harold beheld a sight that, for the moment, nearly paralyzed every sense.

One, two, three—six dark forms were crawling across the opening near the embers of the house, and the glow revealed a painted Indian face to the startled vision of the young mountaineer.

It was evident that the red men had discovered the whereabouts of the whites, and were intent on murdering them as they slept. Harold threw his rifle to his shoulder and covered the foremost head. A moment later the report rang out, and with it a wild, fierce yell, such as only Sioux throats can utter.

The Sioux leaped to their feet and made a dash upon the thicket. Quick as was their movement Red River Bill had gained his feet ere the red devils gained the thicket, and

the light from the lurid embers of the house gave the whites an advantage which they failed not to improve.

There was no time to use his Winchester, but the two six-shooters leaped from his belt, and the scout was soon surrounded by a sheet of flame as his deadly revolvers vomited leaden hail into the scarlet foe.

Harold, forgetting his pistol, clubbed his rifle and struck down one of the red demons just as he gained the edge of the thicket. The fight was short, sharp and decisive, so that by the time Colonel Adams gained his feet and was ready to take a hand in the contest, it was at an end, and seven scarlet bodies lay weltering in their blood under the midnight sky.

Five Indians had fallen by the hand of Red River Bill, while young Harold Tracy had the honor of laying out two of the enemy.

"A mighty close call," breathed Harold, as he leaned panting against a tree.

"Yes," uttered Red River Bill, "and we may not be out of the scrape yet."

"Do you think there are more of the red devils now?" questioned Harold, as he proceeded to reload his rifle.

"There's no telling," answered the scout. "I will look around and take a few notes. My notes usually consist in Sioux scalps, but this time I'm going to pass the opportunity by, and let the heathen retain their covering."

Then the scout left the thicket, cautioning his friends to keep a sharp eye out for danger while he was gone.

In the course of half an hour Red River Bill returned, and reported the coast clear. The first gray streaks of day were now brightening the east, and they would soon be ready for a forward movement.

The scout then produced some dried meat from a leathern sack, which was strapped to his back, of which the three partook sparingly, as the supply was not large.

When day at length dawned, a fearful sight presented itself to the inexperienced eyes of Harold, who had that day killed his first Indian. He had been an Indian sympathizer before he came to the Black Hills, firmly believing that the noble red-man had been wronged by his white brother. His experience during the past four-and-twenty hours went far towards obliterating his former opinions.

Seven Indians, hideously painted, lay dead under the clear sky.

Harold shuddered when he thought of the fate which might have been theirs had his half-closed eyes been shut for one minute longer. He did not mention the fact of his sleeping on his post, not caring to receive the merited censure which he knew would follow, but he resolved that this narrow escape should be a lesson to him in the future.

"We are ready, now, I believe," said the scout, even while Harold was communing with his own thoughts, forgetful of his surroundings.

"What, will you go and leave these above ground?" cried Harold, pointing toward the dead Sioux.

A smile swept the face of Red River Bill.

"We would be green enough to waste our time planting such carrion," said the scout. "But for the necessity of immediately taking the trail I should scalp these fellows, but I haven't time to cure the skins."

A shudder passed through the young man's frame at the

cool manner of the scout. But he knew better than to lift up his voice in disapproval. His thoughts turned to Anna, and for the time the dead Indians were forgotten.

After a little search the trail was found, and the three men set out at a rapid walk over the hills.

CHAPTER V.

RED RIVER BILL DOES VITAL WORK.

THE renegade's words, in connection with his brutal treatment of her daughter, had the effect to open Mrs. Adams' eyes, and the nature of the infamous Burling Sharp stood revealed in all its blackness.

Anna's hands were secured, and then the renegade announced himself ready for moving.

Mrs. Adams protested.

"If you have the heart of a man you will allow us to remain here," she said, addressing Burling Sharp.

"No whining," growled the villain. "You hain't got no home here. Old Adams and the boy are dead before now, since several warriors went to look after them, so you may as well content yourself going with me. Remember old times, Julaine?"

"I do," cried the woman, tremulously. "I remember how brave and chivalrous you once were."

"Before you jilted me and married Adams," he interrupted. "That's a fact, but you played a shabby trick on me, and now I'm going to have my revenge. You remember Had Adams?"

"My husband's young brother. He loved him as his life. Certainly I remember him. He mysteriously disappeared some years ago."

"Exactly, and the old man felt purty bad, didn't he?"

"The loss of Had nearly killed Danie!"

A loud laugh fell from the lips of the renegade.

"I meant it should," he uttered.

"What? Did you have ought to do with the young man's disappearance?" cried Mrs. Adams, in astonishment. "I thought Had was drowned in the Missouri—that was the report."

"Exactly; but your husband knew better."

"He never enlightened me if he did."

"Maybe not; but I sent him a note telling him of Had Adams' fate."

"What was it?"

"He fell into my hands. I was captain of a band of road-agents then, and we fixed the boy. Cut him into inch pieces—killed him by inches. Why, you ask, did I do this," and a hideous grin disfigured the face of the speaker. "It was my revenge. I hated old Dan for beating me out of the girl I calculated to marry. I knew how old Dan loved his brother, and so I wreaked vengeance on him, and sent word to Dan of the work I had performed. Dan hates me. Ha, ha! ha! But he'll never have the chance to lay hands on me. Before morning his scalp will dangle at the belt of one of Sitting Bull's braves."

Then, with another blood-curdling laugh, the renegade turned on his heel and walked away.

Shortly after, the little party began their march, with Anna and her mother led by stout red hands.

After going over ridges and through narrow gulches for fully an hour, the party came to a halt.

"If by chance somebody should conclude to take our trail. I think it best to give 'em a little diversion," said the renegade, addressing Mr. Adams.

"You fear pursuit, then?"

"Oh, no, but a new idea has just entered my head," and the renegade showed his teeth in a grin. "The fact is, I've changed my mind since we started on this little honeymoon trip over the hills."

To this neither captive made reply.

"Once I'd a broke my neck running after you, Julaine, but you was a young, rosy-cheeked country girl, then. You are old and wrinkled now, and I vow, I have taken a shine to Miss Anna here, a perfect picture of her mother

in the long ago, she is. Yes, I'll turn the old one over to Sitting Bull, and keep the young and tender one myself. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Infamous scoundrell!"

It was Anna who had at last found words to utter her detestation of the villainous renegade.

Her invective only made him laugh the more. After a short consultation with the Sioux, the party separated, six going in one direction with Mrs. Adams, while the renegade and six comrades, with Anna, took another course.

The parting between mother and daughter was an affecting one. Mrs. Adams pleaded against the separation in vain. The heartless renegade was inexorable.

"You're of no account to me," he said, in a heartless tone, "I shall keep Miss Anna, and thus avenge myself for the past, as well as receive some recompense."

Torn asunder, mother and daughter believed that they would never again look into one another's face.

It was well for the renegade that he divided his party into two. Had he known that the famous scout, Red River Bill, was on his track, he would have felt less elated at the success that had thus far attended his expedition.

Night came and passed.

The Sioux who had Mrs. Adams in charge had halted on the banks of a small creek at the foot of a towering hill. Believing that Adams and Harold were dead long ere this, the red men gave themselves no uneasiness, and were careless about hiding their trail.

In the morning two of the braves left camp in search of game. It was near the middle of the forenoon when they returned, and a bounteous repast was spread out on the ground. Each warrior clutched a bit of partridge, which had been roasted, and, chattering in their own tongue, they began their meal, as yet offering none to their captive, who sat bound and helpless, a few feet from the circle about the fire.

"Ugh!"

This startled exclamation fell from the lips of one of the warriors, and almost on the instant the six redskins sprang to their feet.

Spang! Spang! Spang!

"Down with the red devils! Let none escape!"

The voice of Red River Bill rang clarion-like on the air, as he dashed into the circle, with a deadly six-shooter clutched in each hand.

A yell of rage filled the air, but three of the Sioux had fallen at the first discharge, and two of the remainder were speeding away like the wind. After these the daring scout bounded, running them into a narrow cleft in the rock, where he shot them down without mercy.

The sixth and last Indian believed that his fate was sealed, and with a yell of defiance, sprang to the side of Mrs. Adams, clutching her long hair in his left hand, while his tomahawk was whirled about his head for the fatal stroke.

The terrified woman uttered a wild scream as the keen-edged tomahawk descended. But it did not sink into the brain of the captive.

A bullet from the rifle of Harold Tracy sped on its righteous mission and, as the Sioux poised his murderous weapon for the fatal stroke, a leaden pellet went crashing through his brain, and he fell like a log beside the half-fainting Mrs. Adams.

Quickly young Harold reached the side of his aunt.

"Are you hurt, Aunt Julaine?" he cried, in anxious solicitude.

"No, no," she uttered; "but I expected death. It came very near. Who killed the Indian?"

"It was my bullet that put a quietus to his career," said Harold; "but Red River Bill made the bold dash which scattered the rascals like chaff before the wind."

By this time the scout appeared upon the scene.

Mrs. Adams looked from one to the other in questioning anxiety. Harold seemed to understand her wishes.

"You are looking for Uncle Dan," said the youth.

"He is safe, and will be with us in a few minutes. He made a detour, and was to come up in the rear of the Indians, but the sudden onslaught of this brave man," indicating the scout, "destroyed our plans and the redskins at the same time."

Even while the youth was talking Colonel Adams put in an appearance. He was overjoyed to find his wife safe, and inquired eagerly after Anna.

"She is in the hands of Burling Sharp," said Mrs. Adams; then she explained how the party had separated, the gang under Sharp going to the west.

A groan fell from the lips of the old prospector.

"That Sharp has been the evil genius of my life," he muttered, hoarsely.

"And of mine also," asserted Red River Bill.

CHAPTER VI.

NICK SPOONER.

"THE doom of Burling Sharp draws nigh," uttered Red River Bill, as he leaned on his rifle and gazed fixedly at the remnants of the Sioux meal. "I have not been so near him before in years. He cannot escape my vengeance, the vengeance of a wronged brother."

"Nor mine," echoed the old colonel.

"What a wicked man," mused Mrs. Adams, "and to think that, until yesterday, I remembered Burling Sharp as an honorable man."

Harold gathered up fragments of the feast provided by the late Indians, and the men made quite a comfortable meal from the same. Mrs. Adams partook but sparingly, as she could not bring herself to relish the food handled by the dead Sioux.

"Now, then, we must look for the other trail," cried Harold, when the meal was finished. "I believe we will be able to find it, and the redskins who have Anna in their clutches, before dark."

"Mayhap," returned the scout, "but don't be too sure. No one can tell what the next few hours may bring forth. Our party will be short one rifle hereafter."

"How is that?"

"Colonel Adams will remain behind to care for his wife. You and I must follow the trail of vengeance without his aid hereafter, my boy."

"True enough," cried Harold.

"I should be only too glad to go on, but I have a duty here," responded the colonel.

"I can take care of myself," asserted Mrs. Adams. "If Daniel is needed——"

"He is not," the scout interrupted. "His place is here. If human help is of avail, your daughter shall be rescued very soon. There is a cave not far from here, which you and the colonel had best occupy until you hear from us."

The scout's word was law with our friends, who knew that he was experienced in all that pertained to Indian fighting and woodcraft. The cave proved to be a small affair, just large enough to hide their bodies, but it was a safe place, the safest that could be found, as the scout asserted, and Colonel Adams and his wife believed him.

There was still remnants of the partridges left, which Adams gathered for future use, and then the friends separated, with many misgivings on the part of Mrs. Adams, yet with brave assurances from Harold and the invincible scout, that the end would be a happy one.

It was a long distance back to the point where the trails separated, and the scout refused to take the back track, believing that time would be saved by making a short cut over the hills, to which our young friend Harold gave assent without a word.

The two were soon pursuing their way at a rapid pace. At times, when on the summit of some elevation, the country—hills and dales—was visible for miles, the whole dotted with patches of forest, some of the rocky knobs glowing strongly bright under the rays of the sun.

It was past noon when Red River Bill came to a sudden

halt, and gazed sharply into a valley below. Not yet had they struck the trail of the renegade and his red companions, and Harold began to fear that they had missed it in going on the search in the hap-hazard manner they did, when a low exclamation fell from the lips of his companion.

"What is it, Bill?"

"There's a smoke in the valley. Do you see it?"

Yes, the youth saw bits of blue curling up from a clump of cedars, not over a quarter of a mile distant.

"Indians?" questioned Harold.

"Likely; that remains to be seen. We will advance with caution, and see what we can discover."

Then the two men descended the hill-side, and entered the copse with cautious tread, Harold being guided in his movements by those of the scout.

Presently, Red River Bill came to a halt, parted the bushes and peered cautiously through. After a moment, he turned about, and a fierce glitter filled his eyes as he beckoned Harold to approach.

The youth did so with the utmost caution, and looked through the bushes upon a scene which made his young blood boil with wrath.

There was a broad open space beyond the thicket near the center of which ten hideously painted Indians squatted.

They had kindled a fire and were engaged in eating roast bear-meat. Near at hand, bound to a tree, was a white man, whose grizzled beard and bronzed countenance proclaimed him a hardy son of the mountains.

About the prisoner was heaped a pile of brushwood.

"Just in time," whispered the scout. "These red devils mean to burn that man after dinner, but I think they will slip up in their calculations. Let that big chap on the right fill your sights, young man, I will tend to the others."

The scout's sixteen-shooter was quickly thrown to his shoulder, while Harold covered his man.

Spang!

Harold fired, and the huge Sioux on the right keeled over with a bullet in his brain. Then, in rapid succession, came the reports of Red River Bill's Winchester.

A shrill screech echoed over the hills as the redskins bounded to their feet, some to fall almost instantly, while others went limping away with severe wounds.

"Whoopee!" shouted the scout, as he fired the last shot from his Winchester, and with a revolver clinched in either hand, he bounded forward to complete the slaughter so auspiciously begun.

The Sioux were taken completely by surprise, and not one had time to secure a weapon with which to defend himself. When Red River Bill dashed from cover three savages were dashing away for dear life.

The sharp reports of the scout's revolvers cut the air and two of the red demons went to join their fellows, but one of the three disappeared in the bushes, making good his escape.

"Land o' liberty!" ejaculated the man tied to the tree, when Red River Bill approached, after seeing the last Sioux disappear, "ef this ain't Red River Bill, then I'm a dirty skunk. I'd gin ye a hand, pard, ef they wasn't tied up fur fuel."

The scout uttered an exclamation of surprise, then he quickly severed the cords binding the old man, and was soon shaking him warmly by the hand.

"Nick Spooner, by all that's good!"

For some moments no more passed between the two old friends so unexpectedly thrown together.

"Blast my legs, Bill, but I thort you was down in Arizona. When'd you kim up this way?"

"Two months ago."

"Lookin' fur Serpent Tongue up this way, boss?"

"I am. He isn't far away, either."

"You're right," asserted Nick Spooner. "I got sight o' his carcass not long ago. By thunder, Bill, you laid out the red Turks beautiful, I swar you did. Gracious! I

thort ther evil one war pumpin' thunder at two cents a clap, the way things flew 'round hyer fur a spell."

Nine of the prairie wanderers lay in the shroud of death, and another laurel was added to the many already crowning the head of Red River Bill, the Prince of Scouts.

Harold stood looking at the work of the scout in silent amazement. Surely the scout wore his title justly. He was a dead-shot with the pistol, and the best Indian fighter on the north-western border, not excepting the far-famed Buffalo Bill, with whom our Bill was on friendly terms, the two having met on several excursions on the North Platte.

Nick Spooner went among the dead and selected arms to suit his fancy. He found his own revolver and knife, and a rifle better than his own, being one which our Government had donated on a former occasion.

"Pretty good!" ejaculated Spooner.

Then, of a sudden, he bent over the redskin that Harold had slain, and with a dextrous movement, tore the scalp-lock from his head.

It proved to be the braided tuft of a chief.

"Thar," ejaculated the old man, as he held his trophy aloft, "I've got Raven Wing's scalp-lock at last. I swore I'd take it, but it rightfully belongs to you, Bill."

"No, it's his," pointing to Harold.

But the youth refused to touch the disgusting trophy. It made his nerves crawl to see old Nick handle the top-knot.

"You are welcome to the hair for all of me," uttered Harold.

"Thankee, boyee. I'll do you a good turn some day, p'raps. I owed Raven Wing one, an' now we're even."

CHAPTER VII.

A DEMON INCARNATE.

BURLING SHARP had an objective point in view when he separated from the party that held Mr. Adams.

Some miles away, far up among the highest of the Black Hills, the renegade had discovered a cave, the mouth of which was concealed from all observing eyes by a dense growth of wild vines.

To reach this spot would require many hours of travel, but the renegade had resolved to make it as soon as possible. That night the party camped in a natural basin, under frowning cliffs, where no person would be likely to look for human beings.

Early in the morning the renegade brought some food in the shape of dried bear meat to his fair captive. She refused to eat at first.

"You'd best eat, my girl," said the villain. "It's a mighty tough trip you've got before you to-day, and you'll need all your strength, for mind you, you've got to go, if you have to be carried."

This threat had its effect, and the captive partook sparingly of food for which, under the circumstances, she had no relish.

"You needn't hope for rescue," said Sharp, after the girl had eaten. "All your friends are dead. An Indian scout come in not an hour since with a report of the shooting of Colonel Adams and his nephew."

"I believe you utter a lie now!" Anna asserted, with a boldness that astonished the renegade.

He regarded her fixedly for a moment, then a low laugh fell from his lips.

"You are very free to insult me just now," he said, a dark look creeping into his face. "The time will soon come when you will be ready to fall on your knees and beg abjectly for mercy."

"Never!" asserted the captive.

But the renegade turned on his heel and left her without attempting further argument. A short time later the party were on the move again.

They had gone but a short distance when they were joined by a party of ten, thus making the complement of fighting men sixteen, beside the renegade.

"You see, my strength increases as we move along," he said to Anna. "Sitting Bull would willingly send me a hundred warriors if I needed them, as I do not."

"You may see the need of them yet," retorted Anna, who would not allow the villain's words to affect her spirits. "There are more whites among these hills than you imagine, Sir Renegade."

He laughed.

"I am glad you are so hopeful. A moping bride is not to my taste. After this war is over I am to come in second to Sitting Bull, and you shall share the glories of a monarch. Ha, ha, ha!"

To this the maiden made no reply.

The journey that day was a long and tiresome one, but it came to an end at last, and Anna knew that she was many miles from friends, perhaps never doomed to see father and mother again. It was everything but a pleasant outlook, yet Anna bore up bravely under it all, hoping for the best, when the worst was the most likely to occur.

A narrow, dark cavity in the rock was the place into which Burling Sharp introduced his captive.

"Here you are to remain for the present," said the renegade. "I heard some excitement a moment ago, and I must go and ascertain its cause."

He left her there.

The maiden made her way to the mouth of the cave and peered out. Darkness was fast enshrouding the valley, but Anna failed not to notice two dark forms standing guard near the mouth of the cave outside.

"He has removed the bonds from my hands," murmured the fair captive, "but I am no nearer to freedom than before. Those red demons would brain me if I should attempt to escape."

The renegade did not come back, and Anna was left to herself during the night. She rested but little, since she could not sleep under the dangers that menaced on every hand.

Another day dawned upon the mountains. With the first gray streaks, a dark face peered into the cave.

"Ready for breakfast, my dear?"

Anna answered in the affirmative, and received dried meat, and bit of dry crust, without a murmur.

"You shall fair more royally when we reach Sitting Bull's camp," said the renegade. "At present you will be obliged to put up with such food as the rest of us eat."

"I am thankful for anything from your hands," said Anna. "I expected you would murder me ere this."

"You wronged me then. By the way, some of my red friends brought in a prisoner last night. After you have digested your breakfast, we will interview the lad."

He departed then, but returned in the course of an hour, and led her forth from the cave.

"Look yonder. Do you know that chap?"

Anna uttered a cry of dismay.

Some rods below the rocky platforms on which they were standing, was a stunted tree. About this were gathered nearly a score of Sioux armed with clubs, stones, and sharp sticks.

Stripped to the waist, and bound to the tree, was a youth whom Anna, in her first horror, failed to recognize, but a second glance told her the awful truth. The doomed man was her cousin, Harold Tracy.

"Do you recognize the fellow?" again questioned the heartless renegade.

"Great heavens, yes, it is Harold Tracy," gasped the maiden, a sickening horror creeping into her heart at the sight.

"Nice young chap; I think a good deal of him; don't you, Anna?"

But the white-faced girl uttered nothing further just then. The red devils were dancing about in a circle, brandishing their clubs and uttering the most ear-splitting yells. Just then the poor prisoner glanced upward and caught sight of Anna and the renegade.

"My God! Anna, don't stand there," cried the youth.

"Go away. They will torture me, and I shall try to be brave, and die like a man; but oh, Anna!"

He could say no more, and his chin fell forward upon his breast.

The renegade laughed satanically.

"He'll die bravely, *he* will," sneered Burling Sharp. "Bet a thousand to one the baby-faced scout'll whine and squall like an infant when my red friends begin to touch the quick. Listeu. You must not go. You shall stand here, my dear, and witness the sport. They will gouge out his pretty blue eyes, and trim off his ears. Pretty sight then for a lady's drawing-room. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Devil incarnate!" cried the half-fainting girl.

"Compliments sound sweet from your lips, my dear. No, you shan't go. I'm not going to allow you to miss any of the sport. The lad's ears will do to put on a string for the Indian papooses to play with. Ha, ha, ha!"

The red demons began to ply their clubs, striking light blows at first, and Anna reeled sick and faint at the sight.

"Go, Anna, go!" cried the youth once more. "The sight of you here quite unnerves me."

She reeled back a step, then confronted the renegade, her dark eyes full of a wild, woful pleading that would have touched a heart of stone.

"Burling Sharp, if you are a man, listen——"

"But I will not listen," he hissed, his black eyes snapping like fire-bugs. "I swore to humiliate the daughter of Colonel Adams, and I am going to do it."

"You have done it. See!" and the maiden sank on her knees before him, and clasped one of his hands in both her own. "In Heaven's name spare my poor cousin! Spare him, Mr. Sharp, and I will do anything you wish."

"Bah!" he sneered. "It is too late, my girl. This woman-faced cousin of yours is doomed. See! see him wince and cringe under the torture. Ha, ha, ha!"

But she did not look. Almost lifeless, she crouched at his feet, moaning and shuddering, with both hands covering her face to shut out the awful sight.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCOUT'S STRATEGY.

HAROLD TRACY had been left on guard by Red River Bill on the night of his capture. He had not been discreet, else he would never have fallen into the enemy's hands as he did.

It was late in the evening, after the scout and old Nick Spooner had fallen asleep, that the youth heard the neigh of a horse at no great distance from camp.

"By gracious!" thought the youth, "there's a horse loose out yonder. I wouldn't mind bringing the chap in."

Thus musing, and with the carelessness of youth and inexperience, the lad had left his post and went in search of the supposed horse. Not ten yards had he gone from his sleeping friends when a dark form pounced upon him from behind. The butt of a tomahawk rendered him senseless. In this condition his hands were bound, and when he recovered he found himself walking over the uneven ground with a redskin on either side.

Doubtless it had been the Indian's intention to dispose of the two sleeping whites, but the noise made in securing the youth roused the sharp-eared scout, who sprang to his feet, with both pistols drawn, and gazed about on every hand. Nothing met his gaze, but the sound of retreating steps fell on his ear.

Then, for the first time, he discovered that the guard was nowhere to be seen. After looking about a bit, Bill kicked his companion, who bounded to his feet like a rocket.

"Eh. Wot's the racket, hoss?"

"I don't exactly know," whispered Red River Bill. "Our young friend seems to have left his post. He must have gone voluntarily."

"Durn my snoot, hoss, this looks bad. Better call the lad."

"No use," answered the scout. "There's no doubt in my mind as to his fate."

"Gone under, you think?"

"I fear so. Look sharp, there are reds around, I can smell them."

"Lord, wot a smeller you've got, hoss," ejaculated Spooner. "Mebbe I'd better take a scout around an' see wot's about."

"Very well," agreed the scout, "but be mighty careful, Nick. Don't throw your life away. I've an idea the hills are full of Sioux."

"Trust me for holdin' onter my skull," grunted old Nick, as he moved away in the darkness.

The result of the hunt revealed nothing.

The two men realized that an enemy of some kind had been near the camp, and Red River Bill believed that Harold Tracy had been murdered.

The scout sought a spot nearly half a mile away in which to pass the remainder of the night.

At early dawn the two friends repaired to their old camping ground, from the vicinity of which the captors of Harold Tracy were easily traced.

"The lad is a prisoner," uttered Red River Bill, the moment he placed his eyes on the footprints.

"It do look thet way," responded Nick. "Pr'aps the cusses'll be fools 'nough ter lead us right onto old Serpent Tongue; who knows?"

"We will follow the scamps at any rate," was the scout's reply.

As Nick Spooner surmised, the trail led our two friends directly to the spot where Burling Sharp and his gang of red demons had halted, near the mouth of the mountain cave.

From a convenient clump of bushes Red River Bill looked over upon the scene that was transpiring near the mouth of the renegade's cave. Stripped to the waist, ready to be subjected to Indian torture, was Harold Tracy, while some rods above, on a rocky shelf, stood the monster, Burling Sharp, holding Anna by the hand while he gazed down upon the awful scene below.

The sight of Burling Sharp caused Red River Bill to grate his teeth with rage, and once he raised his rifle and covered the heart of the renegade, but of a sudden a new idea seemed to enter his brain, and he lowered his rifle.

"No, no, not yet," he muttered through close shut teeth. "Live for a little longer, Burl Sharp. Your time is short, anyhow."

Then he glanced at the crowd of Indians waltzing about the bound and helpless Harold. After a moment of reflection, the scout turned to his companion.

"Nick, old boy, something desperate's got to be done, else little Harold is a goner."

"Fact, Billy boyee," grunted Spooner.

"See here, Nick, will you do as I tell you?"

"Ter a dot, hoss."

"Then listen. Go up to the left yonder, and fire off your revolver and yell like Satan. This will create a diversion, and most of the redskins will rush that way to see what's up. Then, you see, I step in and set the youngster free. After that we'll manage the fight as seems best. Understand?"

"I reckon," drawled old Spooner.

Then he hastened away to carry out the instructions of Red River Bill, whom he looked up to and trusted as some superior being.

Nick Spooner was not long in gaining a position satisfactory to himself.

"Tain't best ter waste too much powder on nothin'," muttered the old man, "so, bein' it's jist ther same, I'll put in lots o' yellin' in place o' burnin' ammunition."

Forward went the revolver of old Nick.

The muzzle was pointed just above the renegade's head.

"I'll gin the dirty pup a skeer, anyhow."

Spang! spang!

Two sharp reports from a clump of bushes to the right,

then the loud voice of the old mountain hunter made the welkin ring in a series of shrieks and yells that would have done honor to a first-class catamount.

"Whoopee! Down wi' the dirty nagurs."

The diversion was a success.

Burling Sharp pushed Anna back into the cave and drew his revolver, while the Sioux turned from their prisoner and rushed forward to repel the enemy from above.

Red River Bill glided like a cat into the open space behind the bound Tracy, and with a few dexterous strokes of his knife cut the cords that bound the youth.

"Run, bub, run!" cried the scout in Harold's ear. "I'll see you later."

Of course Harold profited by the scout's advice, and at once darted away, drawing his shirt about his shoulders as he ran.

Then, falling back to cover, Red River Bill opened fire upon the scrambling savages, who were rushing in the direction from whence came old Nick's shots.

"Whoopee! Down with the red nagurs."

Old Nick was firing to kill now, and two redskins tumbled before the muzzle of his revolver. The scout was doing even greater havoc in the rear, and the Sioux, believing they were surrounded by a superior force of whites, scattered and dashed down the mountain like a flock of frightened sheep.

After the flight of the savages, Red River Bill and old Nick pushed their way forward and clasped hands over their victory.

Six Sioux had fallen under the deadly fire of the revolvers of Red River Bill and Nick Spooner.

"The gal, whar's she?" questioned Nick.

"She was up there a moment ago. Quick, we must not allow Serpent Tongue to escape with the girl," cried the scout earnestly.

Even as the plainsman spoke, a sharp report smote the air, and Dick Spooner staggered, clutched wildly at the air, and then fell prone upon his face. Almost instantly another shot pealed forth, and a bullet grazed the bronzed cheek of Red River Bill. The renegade was putting in his work with a vengeance.

CHAPTER IX.

A FIGHT AND A FALL.

RED RIVER BILL sprang to cover at once. It was not pleasant standing up for the target of a concealed enemy. He dared not return the renegade's fire for fear of hitting Anna.

The situation was most mortifying. The victory which had been so signally gained was now less than half a victory, with Anna still in the hands of the renegade.

Doubtless, too, the Sioux would soon return to look after their dead, and learn the number of the enemy from whom they had fled so precipitately.

Old Nick was dead, and Harold a fugitive without arms. It looked, just then, as though the scout was the only one left to battle for the right. But Red River Bill was a man of expedients, besides possessed of rare courage and good judgment.

To bring the renegade under fire was now his object. While he remained in the cave it would not be safe to fire upon him. If the Sioux did not return, Bill believed that he could hold the renegade in his present position until starvation made him surrender.

The outlook, on the whole, was not pleasing even to the sanguine scout.

If Red River Bill felt some misgivings as to the result, the feelings of the renegade were even more disturbed. His friends had been put to flight, and the terror of evil-doers was on guard, watching for an opportunity to send in a shot.

Anna, overjoyed at the escape of her cousin, sat calmly in the rear end of the cave, watching, as well as the dim light would permit, the features of the renegade.

"My friends are not all dead yet, Sir Renegade," said Anna. "I see now, that you have lied to me all along."

An oath fell from the lips of Burling Sharp.

"You haven't triumphed yet," he growled. "One of your friends has gone to his last account, anyhow. That brave little cousin of yours has run like a frightened deer, and only one now stands to attempt your rescue."

"And that is my father?"

"Not so. He is a harder pill to manage."

"Who is it?"

"It don't matter to you, my girl," snarled Sharp.

"You bet yer life on one thing, you won't never escape from me. Before I let you fall into the hands of Red River Bill, I will take your life, remember that, my girl."

The girl uttered a low cry.

"Red River Bill!" she exclaimed. "If he is on your track, Burling Sharp, I am satisfied that you are in a tight place. He is the greatest scout on the plains."

The renegade cursed himself for uttering the great scout's name. He swore inwardly that Anna should die by his hand before he would permit his old enemy to rescue her.

With rifle cocked, the renegade sat near the mouth of the cave, where he could look out upon the hillside and detect the movement of the enemy.

While he sat thus his quick eye caught the rustle of some low bushes half-way down to the spot where Red River Bill had secreted himself.

The eyes of the renegade watched the spot narrowly. Of a sudden, a strange thing happened. The body of Old Nick lay nearly crosswise of the hill, and of a sudden it began to roll like a log down the declivity. By some means it had become loosened, and soon went spinning out of sight into the bushes below.

If the renegade was a little startled at this strange occurrence, Red River Bill was no less so when the body of Old Nick came crashing down into his place of concealment.

"What the devil!" ejaculated the scout.

"I shud say so, Billy boyee."

The next moment the supposed dead man stood up boldly in front of the astonished scout.

"Well, well, this beats my time," uttered Red River Bill, as he gazed wonderingly upon the resurrected mountaineer.

"The bullet ain't molded as is ter kill Old Nick," chuckled the old man.

An examination showed that the renegade's bullet had passed the length of the old mountaineer's skull without breaking it. A stunning effect and an ugly wound was left to show for the outlaw's shot.

"W'en I kim to know whar I was," said Nick, "I kinder thor't 'twouldn't be policy ter up an' run, so, arter thinkin' the matter over, I kinder let go all ter once, and rolled like a log down hyer."

"A marvelous escape," ejaculated the scout. "You must pick up some weapons and then look for Harold Tracy."

"Injins all gone?"

"Yes, though some of the red scamps are liable to return at any moment. I can't leave my post here for a moment. Old Burling Sharp is cooped up in a little cave up yonder, and I don't mean to let him escape me this time."

Nick Spooner was not long in providing himself with a full set of weapons from the fallen redskins, remembering to keep himself hidden from the mouth of the renegade's cave meantime. Then he went down the mountain to look after the late captive, Harold Tracy.

Following the advice of the scout, Harold sped rapidly away, anxious only to set distance between himself and the Sioux. He never once imagined that Red River Bill would be able to disperse sixteen warriors, and so he thought not of looking back to the Indian camping-ground for his friends.

After going nearly half a mile, Harold came to a halt, and gazed sharply about him. No sign of friend or foe presented himself, and with a sigh of relief the late prisoner sank wearily upon a rock and finished securing his wardrobe.

The redskins had not removed the youth's shirt, only slipped it down about his waist. This being of substantial stuff, served as a very good covering without coat or vest.

"Now, then, I suppose I may as well wait for something to turn up," mused the youth. "I wish I had my weapons back again. I think hereafter I'll know enough not to leave camp on a fool's errand, as I did last night."

For a long time the youth sat musing, and wondering how the present unpleasantness would end.

Spang!

The whizzing bullet cut a lock of hair from Harold's head. The youth bounded up like a rocket and gazed sharply about.

He was not to remain long in doubt as to the enemy who sought his life. The bushes parted near at hand and two stalwart savages rushed forth.

It was evident they knew the youth was unarmed, and thus they came upon him with the intention of making him a prisoner.

Harold glanced about him for a weapon. None was at hand, and before he could flee the foremost savage had grappled with him.

Then the two struggled for a moment desperately, and, after a moment, went to the earth, rolling over and over in the dirt.

The second Indian sat watching the struggle with a grin of eminent satisfaction irradiating his ugly countenance. He seemed to think his companion was abundantly able to care for the stripling, and so made no move to assist him.

Harold struggled desperately. To fall again into the hands of the Sioux was to insure his death in a most horrible manner.

During the struggle the youth caught sight of a knife-handle sticking from the redskin's belt.

With a quick movement he caught the handle and drew forth the knife.

A wild shriek proclaimed that Harold had made good use of the advantage gained. Again and again did he plunge the knife to the hilt into the red devil's side.

The Sioux seemed tenacious of life, and hung to his grip with the fury of desperation. A vital spot was touched at length, however, and he rolled over in the agonies of death.

Like a rocket Harold bounded to his feet, just as the dead Indian's companion loosed his tomahawk and darted forward with a yell.

Believing he could not cope with the better-armed savage, Harold resolved to trust to his heels, and turning, he dashed away.

Fatal move.

But a few steps had he taken when his toe caught a stone and he was hurled violently to the ground.

At this unlooked-for mishap the Sioux warrior uttered an ear-splitting yell and sprang upon the fallen youth, with tomahawk upraised to cleave the boy's skull in twain.

CHAPTER X.

A NEW DANGER.

HAROLD TRACY, partially stunned by his fall, saw but dimly the upraised tomahawk of the Sioux brave. That his doom was sealed he did not doubt; and had the deadly hatchet performed its work the youth would have passed to the land of shadows without realizing his fate.

But it was not thus ordained.

As the deadly weapon of the Sioux was on the point of descending the sharp spang of a rifle cut the air, and the red assassin plunged to the ground with a bullet through his brain.

When Harold, smeared with the blood of the fallen red-

skin, gained his feet, the grizzled face of old Nick Spooner put in an appearance.

"Mighty clus shave, me boyee," ejaculated the old man. "You'n I hev been in the shadder o' death ter-day, lad, an' know wot danger is."

Harold grasped the old man's hand with a cry of joy, while his face beamed with glad thanksgiving.

"How can I thank you, Mr. Spooner?"

"Dern my eyes, boyee, none o' thet!" and the rough sleeve went across the old eyes. "Kim 'long o' me. I 'spect we'll be needed up yon, whar Bill's a-keepin' watch o' the cave."

"The Sioux—where are they?"

"Echo ans'ers whar, me boyee," returned the old mountaineer.

"I have no arms," said the youth, mournfully.

"Well, darn my skin, you kin soon pervide fur that," and the old man pointed to a rifle and tomahawk that lay near.

"Uncle Sam has fitted out these red cusses in good fightin' trim. Old Sittin' Bull's hog fat eatin' gover'ment rations, an' ready now ter pay 'em in bullets an' tommyhawks. Pesky poor policy, cramin' an' feedin' the enemy, I think, boyee."

"Quite a logician, my friend," returned Harold, forcing a laugh. Then he went about arming himself with rifle and tomahawk.

"We are ready, Nick."

"'Bout face; march," uttered Spooner.

The two were soon making their way back to the spot occupied by Red River Bill.

They found the scout at his post, his face wearing an uneasy expression.

"I am glad you found the boy," said Red River Bill. "Now that we are together once more we will try and not separate again."

"What's up, Billy boyee."

"Ah, you have noticed that something is wrong," uttered the scout. "Just go over there to the left and take a look off to the southwest, and see if you can discover anything unseemly."

The old mountaineer moved away.

The point mentioned was out of range of the mouth of the cave, a spot visited by the scout during the absence of Nick Spooner.

"Well, what did you discover?" questioned Red River Bill, when the old mountaineer returned.

"Thander an' blazes!"

"Well, did the sight surprise you?"

"It ar' Sittin' Bull's hull tribe, hoss, the very last man on 'em."

"Not so bad as that, I hope," returned the scout, "but there's a large body of Sioux on the plain, moving toward the hills, and it is evident to me that this place 'll prove too hot to hold us before long. I don't want to leave until I fix yonder renegade, however."

"Durn my skin, boyee, this 'ere's a putty kettle o' fish."

"It's bad for our side, at any rate," admitted the scout.

Old Nick gritted his teeth and gazed fixedly into the muzzle of his rifle for some moments.

"Darn my skin, hoss, I've a notion to make a dive fur the cave yonder. Mebbe ole Serpent Tongue wouldn't hit a feller. Ef he didn't, I'd make mince-meat o' him in no time."

"No, no, my brave old pard, you shan't throw your life away in any such manner," cried Red River Bill, quickly.

"If we are not discovered by the Indians, down yonder, until night comes, we can then creep in upon Burling Sharp, and capture or kill the scamp. That is our only hope of success, old man."

"Mebbe you're right, boyee."

"Certainly I am," returned the scout. "One of us had better keep an eye out for the Indians below while the rest watch the cave."

"A good idea."

Harold stood an interested listener. At the end he sig-

nified his willingness to act as a spy on the movements of the Indians.

"I don't know about it," responded Red River Bill. "You are hardly reliable."

The youth blushed under the earnest gaze of the famous scout. He knew that he deserved all the distrust with which the scout viewed him.

"I will try and retrieve my past folly," said Harold, meekly.

"I think you had better remain with me, young man. Old Nick understands watching redskins better than you do; we will let him take the responsible position of watcher."

And thus it was arranged.

When Old Nick went once more to his point of observation he found that the Indians had halted at the foot of the hills and gone into camp. They were mounted on mustangs, and undoubtedly on their way to join the Sioux, Sitting Bull. The old man judged that the camp was nearly two miles distant, and while the redskins remained in camp, no danger was to be apprehended, unless from some scouting party.

The party lately under Burling Sharp might meet these new arrivals and report the presence of whites in the vicinity, in which case our friends might expect an overwhelming attack at any moment.

It so happened that the mouth of the cave faced toward the prairie, and from his post of observation, the keen-eyed renegade had discovered the approaching body of Sioux.

A pleased glow passed over the villain's dark face, and every now and then a delighted chuckle would fall from his lips. From this Anna began to fear that her friends had withdrawn from the vicinity.

At length, however, the renegade turned towards his captive.

"Come here, Anna, I've something to show you."

She advanced to his side.

Through a slight opening in the leafy covering outside he pointed, and the gaze of the fair girl followed his finger. The troop of Indians, just halting near the foot of the hills met her eye.

"My friends abound on every hand, you see," chuckled the renegade. "I wouldn't much wonder if old Sitting Bull himself was with yonder band. If so, I wouldn't give much for your friends chance of escape."

The cheek of Anna Adams blanched.

It seemed as though the whole hill country swarmed with savages, and the outlook for the few whites there were was a very slim one, indeed.

"Evil seems ever to triumph," groaned Anna, losing her brave demeanor under the stress of new complications. She went back to her old position, and sat mutely awaiting the denouement, whatever it may be.

But the hours slowly passed with no demonstration from without.

"When night comes on I shall leave this cave and make an effort to reach my friends below," said the renegade, "and you will accompany me without making the least noise."

"I shall not stir from here with you," asserted Anna, with sudden vehemence.

"Indeed, but you will," and the renegade exhibited a knife and brandished it before her eyes. "I'll cut your pretty throat if you give me any trouble, remember that, my girl."

Anna made no reply to this brutal threat.

With his rifle cocked, the renegade remained on the watch during the long hours that followed, but no head came within view, neither did the scarlet hosts of Sitting Bull come to the aid of the beleaguered renegade.

Night shadows began to fall with the situation unaltered. Not a sound came from the outside to indicate the proximity of an enemy, but the renegade knew full well that this deep silence was no indication of the absence of his enemies. They lurked within pistol shot, anxious to catch

sight of his head, which would then become a work for bullets.

The night threatened to prove a dark one, and Burling Sharp formed his plans for escaping to the Indians under its protecting mantle.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE HANDS OF THE SIOUX.

WHEN night's thick curtain hung over earth and sky, Burling Sharp laid his hand on the arm of Anna.

"Come," he said, in low tones, "we must get out of this, and remember I'll have no noise from you. The least sign of a sound, and my knife shall find your heart."

Without a word the girl allowed him to lead her forth from the cave. Thoughts of escape filled her brain, and even with the renegade's threat ringing in her ears, the brave girl resolved to improve the first opportunity to make a dash for liberty.

Once in the outer air, a deep sense of relief came to the maiden. The hand of the renegade clung to her arm, and while in his power, she dared make no noise to attract the notice of her friends.

Slowly and cautiously the renegade and his fair captive passed from the mouth of the cave to the right, passing over the ridge not twenty feet from where old Nick Spooner lay concealed.

The rustle of Anna's garments attracted the old man's notice, and he pricked up his ears and listened. The sound died away with the moan of the breeze, and Spooner believed he had been mistaken about hearing other sounds than the wind.

About the time that the renegade formed his plans for leaving the cave, Red River Bill was devising a way for creeping upon the enemy and surprising him in the darkness. So that, shortly after the renegade's departure from the cave, the irrepressible scout crept on all fours up to the entrance and listened.

No sound came to his ear, and after a moment's hesitation, knife in hand, the scout crept within the cave. Slowly he made his way forward, expecting every moment to be pounced upon in the darkness.

With all his caution, however, the scout was not long in discovering that the cave was empty.

Then an imprecation fell from the lips of Red River Bill.

"Outwitted by a cursed renegade," he growled through close-shut teeth. "By Heaven! the scamp can't have been gone long. He must have discovered the Sioux down at the foot of the hills, and is now making a straight wake for their camp."

Chafing under his chagrin, the scout left the cave and hastened to the side of old Nick Spooner, who ordered the scout to halt when he came near.

"Hist!" ejaculated Red River Bill.

"Ah, it's you, boyee," cried the old hunter. "Wot's up, Billy?"

"We have been outwitted, like the pair of fools that we are," growled the scout. "Serpent Tongue has escaped from the cave with his prisoner. He must have passed near you, Nick."

"Blast my old ears," ejaculated the hunter, "I did hear something just above me, not two minutes ago. Thought 'twas the wind."

"Which way was it?"

"Jist up yon."

"Come on then, and make no noise," cried the scout in an eager whisper, moving rapidly away.

Nick Spooner followed close behind, Harold being forgotten for the time in their eager search for the fleeing renegade.

Each step took them nearer the Indian camp, and lessened the chances for a successful issue to their expedition.

Of a sudden a sharp scream smote the air not ten yards distant, and the next moment a slight form came dashing toward the two men.

"Halt!" cried the scout.

"Who speaks?" cried the voice of Anna, the late captive.

"I am your friend, Miss Adams," said the scout.

"Where is your captor?"

"Close at hand," asserted the panting girl. "He dropped my own for a moment, and I made a dash for liberty, not, however, expecting to run upon friends."

"We'd best dig out, now the gal's safe," suggested Nick.

"Not yet," hissed Red River Bill. "My sister's murderer is near, and I have sworn to have his life. I shall not leave the trail until Serpent Tongue dies."

"Where is Harold?" questioned Anna.

"Safe, over yon," answered Nick. "I'm with yer, Billy boyee, ter ther death."

While this discussion was going on the renegade was making good his escape to the plain below where his scarlet friends were encamped. Anna had darted away from him unexpectedly. He took but a few steps in pursuit, when he heard the voices of his enemies, and realized that the girl had made good her escape for the present.

Of course it was impossible for our friends to find the renegade in the dark, a fact which even Red River Bill had to acknowledge, after scouting about in the dark for some time.

The scout stood once more beside old Nick and Anna.

"There's but one course to pursue," he said rapidly.

"You folks must put distance between yourselves and the Indians before morning. I shall not leave this vicinity until I put a bullet through the heart of Serpent Tongue."

"Don't risk your life," said Anna. "Let the renegade go for the present."

"The gal's advice are wise," asserted Nick Spooner.

And after a brief time for reflection, the scout arrived at the same conclusion.

"It is necessary that I should conduct the girl back to her parents," he said. "It's hardly likely that Harold would know the way."

"Hardly," returned old Nick. "Mebbe we'd best back up the chap, and pivit our toes away from this quarter."

This suggestion was acted upon, but no Harold was to be found.

"Bust my buttons!" ejaculated old Nick, "the boy's give us the slip agin, fur sartin." Then the old man called the youth by name, in a low tone. No answer was returned.

"There's no use calling," said Red River Bill; "the boy has taken another scoot for himself. We can't spend time looking him up now."

Anna thought this a harsh resolution, but the scout soon convinced her of its wisdom, and the three soon started on their way out of the immediate neighborhood of the Sioux encampment.

The little party had gone but a short distance when they run suddenly upon an unexpected danger—a dark hole in the ground—into which old Nick stumbled, breaking his leg.

This was a most serious mishap.

The old man urged Red River Bill and Anna to leave him, but neither would consent to such a move.

The scout was in favor of secreting the disabled man and pushing on, but Anna objected, and so the whole party remained in a little copse during the night.

When the first gray streaks of day appeared Red River Bill started forth from their covert to reconnoiter. He had gone some rods, and was on the point of peering over a ridge, when the very heavens seemed split by Indian yells.

Then came Anna's scream.

Whirling, the scout darted down towards his old position, just in time to see Anna struggling in the arms of a hideously-painted Sioux. The Winchester of the scout spoke, and the maiden's captor fell. But fully a score of painted demons crowded upon the scene.

Six of the scarlet horde went down, and then Red River

Bill received a blow on the head that sent him, bleeding and senseless, to the earth.

CHAPTER XII.

A SHOT IN TIME.

WHEN Red River Bill regained consciousness he found himself in a most humiliating position. He was lying on the ground, with hands and feet securely bound with buckskin thongs.

Old Nick lay groaning near, while seated about, eating their morning meal, was a dozen painted Sioux warriors.

"Billey, boyee, be yer awake?"

"What is it, Nick?"

"Ugh, I thort you waz killed entirely. It's a bad day for you, Billy, boyee, that you stayed long o' me."

"Don't refer to by-gones," cried the scout. "If we are to die we will die like men."

"You bet."

Just then a heavy step crashed on the leaves, and the next moment the dark face of Burling Sharp bent over the helpless scout.

The villain indulged in a sharp laugh; then he kicked the bound man smartly.

"You dirty skunk!" cried old Nick, with flashing eyes, "you ain't fit ter speak to white folks. Stop kickin' the boyee, or I'll light on yer."

"I'll do something besides kick," snorted the renegade, as he seized hold of the scout and placed him in a sitting posture. "How do you like your present position, Bill, old boy?"

"You are the same low devil as of old," was the scout's reply, his bosom heaving with concentrated wrath.

"And you are quite as ready to compliment me," retorted the renegade. "I s'pose you have been looking high and low for me the past few months. Well, you've found me now. How do you like the prospect?"

"Immensely. What do you propose doing?"

"I propose to cut out your lying tongue, deprive you of sight as they did Samson of old, and then turn you loose on the world. That's the way I serve my enemies. Your sister Ellen——"

"Stay!" commanded the scout with a shudder. "Do not speak that name."

"You wince, I see. I ruined the girl, and now I propose to fix her brother so his best friends won't know him. I don't do business by halves, old man, as you'll presently see."

"Cussed black skunk," uttered Nick Spooner. "Ef ever I git a chance at yer agin, blast me fur an addlepatet ole woman ef I don't put a bullet whar' it'll balance yer stingy soul on a long voyage, I will, I swar ter gracious."

"You'll never have an opportunity," cried the renegade with a chilling laugh. "You, with with your broken leg'll burn at the stake, to make sport for my Sioux friends, but this man, Prince o' Scouts they call him—I mean to exercise a little of my own ingenuity on him. He's seen his last days on the trail. The terror of Dakota will never more swoop down upon a Sioux camp, with death and destruction, as he has heretofore done I am told."

The morning was rapidly advancing.

After tantalizing his captives until they refused to pay heed to his insulting words, the renegade departed.

He was gone but a little time, and when he returned he led Anna with him. Her arms were bound, and two braves stood ready to seize her should she attempt to escape.

"I've brought this girl here to see the fun," explained the renegade. "I know she will enjoy the sport as well as the rest."

Then the speaker advanced to the side of Red River Bill.

"Put out your tongue," he cried, at the same time flourishing a knife in the face of the helpless scout.

"My God! what would you do?" cried Anna, a white horror stealing over her face.

"What I told you, miss," uttered the renegade, turning

upon Anna. "I will cut out the lying tongue of the biggest scout in the north-west. People said Red River Bill was invincible. I'll show 'em that Burling Sharp is a heap better nor this scout ever was."

"Coward!"

"That will do, my beauty," snarled the fiendish renegade. "Don't you say too much or I'll serve you in the same manner."

"Yer jist mean enough ter do it, I vow," cried old Nick. "Sich a critter az you be is wuss nor any devil that ever lived."

"Put out your tongue."

The renegade turned fiercely upon his helpless prisoners once more.

But the indomitable scout refused to wince.

"Won't put out your tongue, eh?" cried the renegade, in a violent rage. "I'll tear out your eyes, then."

He laid down his knife and sprang at the bound and helpless man, as a tiger upon his prey.

The sharp, claw-like fingers of the renegade were pressed about the scout's eyeballs. Another moment and they would be torn from their sockets.

Old Nick Spooner uttered a yell of indignant rage, and attempted to break his bonds, while Anna came near fainting with terror.

Spang!

The whip-like crack of a rifle broke the morning stillness. The renegade's fingers left the face of his intended victim, and clutched at his side.

"My God, I'm shot!"

With these words, Burling Sharp rolled over on the ground in the agonies of death.

A wild and vengeful whoop went up from the throats of the Sioux. Immediately following the report of the rifle came the sharp spang of a score of carbines, then a ringing cheer, as twenty of Uncle Sam's boys charged upon the remnant of that little band, scattering them like chaff before the wind.

"Whoopee!" screamed old Nick Spooner, as Harold Tracy bent over and severed the cords that bound his limbs.

Red River Bill was soon free.

The renegade still struggled in agony on the ground. "Who—who fired, who killed me?" cried the dying man, hoarsely. "If I'd had a second more—but, oh, God! it's too late!"

"Aye, too late!" cried Harold Tracy. "I fired the bullet which found your life, and I am not sorry for the deed."

"Oh, if I'd had but one minute more!" groaned the dying wretch. But that minute he did not have, and not one present but felt that Burling Sharp had met a just doom.

Harold explained how he had become lost in the hills, and in making his way out ran upon two companies of blue-coats, who were after warlike Sioux.

The major in command readily gave permission for a lieutenant and twenty men to accompany Harold, who came upon the Indians and their captives rather unexpectedly.

The band of Indians, of which these under Sharp were a part, fled on seeing so many soldiers, and thus the coast was clear for a time.

Colonel Adams and his wife were found by Red River Bill, and Major Ringold sent twelve men to escort the family to the nearest fort. At the fort Red River Bill parted from his late friends, including the mountaineer, Spooner, whose broken limb laid him up for some time.

The scout joined the command under Custer, and came near meeting his death a short time later in the Little Big Horn expedition. As for Harold, Anna believed he had proved himself a man in the true sense of the word, and she afterwards became his wife.

[THE END.]

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